



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
Post Office Box 5005
Bay Pines, Florida 33744

May 29, 2023

Dear Veterans, family members, caregivers, and friends:

In 2017, we had a routine security assessment which identified gaps that put our Veterans, staff, caregivers, and visitors at risk from terrorist activity/bomb threat, civil unrest, illegal drug activity, and active shooter.

Primary areas of concerns included no perimeter barrier to control access, no means to effectively shut off road traffic and redirect flow, and inadequate video camera monitoring for the size of campus.

As a result of those findings, we began exploring ways to update our security measures for the Bay Pines VA campus, including the Bay Pines National Cemetery and the VBA Regional Office. The security project alleviates these security risks and greatly improves facility-wide security.

The security project will have periods of work when access and egress will be difficult and inhibited, and it will require the removal of approximately 20-25 trees on our grounds. Specifically, trees behind the main entrance marquee, where a new road bypass will be, and those along the Bay Pines Boulevard wall that are in the way of the new fence line, will be impacted.

These necessary changes assist us with Veteran elopements and the ability to secure the facility during times of disaster and response.

The second and third phases of the project (referenced below) will require a greater police presence and coordination with the Sheriff's Office and Department of Transportation, with expected road backups. Veteran, visitor, and vendor flow will also be impacted which will impact appointment schedules.

Project Phases

1. Phase I: Add perimeter fence along Bay Pines Boulevard and the property as it borders the Bay Pines National Cemetery, through the preserve and up to the main entrance entry and exit gate controls. Automatic gates will limit vehicle traffic when needed (will be open 95% of the time and mainly closed during threat situations or disaster response).

2. Phase II: Modifications to the West (main) entrance/exit. We project Phase II completion will take about 10 weeks. Anticipated Start: Early July 2023
 - a. Adds a police officer pull off lane and turnaround lane to get back to the exit side
 - b. Eliminates the current left turn lane from the entrance
 - c. Adds a third lane on the exit side leaving campus for a total of three exit lanes
 - d. Construction will not require complete closure of the West entrance/exit, but rather intermittent lane closures

3. Phase III: East entrance modifications for VBA and National Cemetery vehicle flow. We project Phase III to take about 12 weeks to complete. This work requires the entrance and exit to be closed entirely until renovation is finished. During this time all traffic flow is in and out of the West (main) entrance/exit. Anticipated Start: Early October 2023.
 - a. Enhances exiting
 - b. Adds a turn lane on Bay Pines Boulevard for vehicles heading east to turn right onto campus. (sidewalk, wall, and lights will be moved and rebuilt accordingly)
 - c. Construction will require complete closure for access and egress for the duration of the work
 - d. Additional video monitoring across the campus and camera replacements

We apologize for any delays these phases may have as you enter and leave the Bay Pines VA campus. **It is most important that when coming for services you allow extra time to get to your appointment on time with these access and egress construction projects.** Please note, these changes are occurring to ensure the safety of every Veteran, family member, caregiver, visitor, and employee. Your safety will always be our highest priority. Thank you for your continued support and allowing us to be your healthcare system of choice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul M. Russo".

Paul M. Russo, MHSA, FACHE, RD
Healthcare System Director/CEO